

**AMERICAN CITIZENS SERVICES**  
**American Citizens Services Newsletter**

**U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA**  
**February 2009**

This periodic email newsletter is a service to U.S. citizens who live in or are travelling through the consular district of the U.S. Consulate General Melbourne, which comprises the States of Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Through this American Citizens Services newsletter, the Consular Section highlights information pertaining to consular procedures, policies, and other topics of general interest to U.S. citizens who have registered with the American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit and provided an email address. If you believe others would benefit from receiving this newsletter, please forward it to them and encourage them to subscribe. To subscribe to our periodic newsletter and receive other updates, please register online by following this link:  
<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/>.

If you do not wish to receive this periodic newsletter, or would like to be removed from our email list, please email us at [MelbourneACS@state.gov](mailto:MelbourneACS@state.gov).

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**[OFFICIAL CONDOLENCES FOR VICTIMS OF RECENT DISASTERS](#)**

**[ASSISTANCE TO U.S. CITIZEN AFFECTED BY THE VICTORIA BUSHFIRES](#)**

**[INFORMATION ON BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS](#)**

**[AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES, MELBOURNE – CHANGE OF PUBLIC HOURS](#)**

**[THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S AGENDA](#)**

**[INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE FORMS AND TAX INFORMATION ON LINE](#)**

**[BRING YOUR OWN PHOTOCOPIES OR PAY THE FEES](#)**

**[CONSULAR OUTREACH – COMING TO A CAPITAL NEAR YOU!!](#)**

**[AVIAN INFLUENZA – BE PREPARED!](#)**

**[ON-LINE APPOINTMENT SYSTEM FOR AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES](#)**

**[AMERICAN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS](#)**

**[TRAVEL INFORMATION](#)**

## **USEFUL WEB SITES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

## **UPCOMING HOLIDAYS AND CONSULATE CLOSURES**

## **OFFICIAL CONDOLENCES FOR VICTIMS OF RECENT DISASTERS**

The highest ranking U.S. Government representatives in Australia attended the National Day of Mourning observation in Melbourne on February 22. Shortly after the awful tragedies of the February 7, 2009 bushfires in Victoria, the U.S. Embassy in Canberra posted the following expression of condolences. U.S. President Obama also directly contacted Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to convey his personal and the country's deepest sympathies and offer all possible assistance. Since then approximately 60 fire fighting personnel from the U.S. have arrived to supplement the heroic efforts of the Australian volunteers. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also called Prime Minister Rudd to reiterate the U.S. President's message of condolences and willingness to provide all possible assistance.

Condolences from the Chief of Mission

I would like to convey my condolences, and those of all of us at the U.S. Embassy and U.S. Consulates across Australia, to the victims of the terrible bushfires in Victoria. Our thoughts are with those who have lost loved ones and all those who have lost their homes.

U.S. officials, including wildfire experts, have been in close consultation with Emergency Management Australia and Victorian firefighting authorities. We stand ready to assist our Australian friends at this terrible time.

I would also like to express our concern for those suffering in the Queensland floods. The ongoing devastation to the lives of those in northern Queensland is heartbreaking.

Americans have great affection and empathy for Australians and so I know I can speak for all Americans in sending our best wishes to you in this challenging time.

Daniel Clune

Chargé D'Affaires, Embassy of the United States, Canberra

## **ASSISTANCE TO U.S. CITIZEN AFFECTED BY THE VICTORIA BUSHFIRES**

The American Citizen Services Unit of the U.S. Consulate General in Melbourne, Australia, encourages all U.S. citizens affected by the Victoria bushfires and who wish consular assistance to contact us at 61-3-9526-5900 during working hours, after hours at 61-2-4422-2201 or via email at [MelbourneACS@state.gov](mailto:MelbourneACS@state.gov). We have responded already to numerous requests from U.S. relatives for information on their loved ones, including some who resided in states not affected by the bushfires, and aided several U.S. citizens in replacing passports lost in the fires. We take this opportunity to encourage ALL U.S. citizens visiting or residing overseas to register that trip/residence on-line through the Department of State Web site,

<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>. Such registration greatly assists us in locating U.S. citizens who may require assistance after a disaster such as the recent bushfires. Please remember to update this information if you move.

## **INFORMATION ON BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS**

Drawing from Internet sites and other public sources, the Management Office of the U.S. Consulate General in Melbourne recently provided to employees and their dependents guidance on bushfire preparedness. This information may also be useful to U.S. citizens and we therefore are reprinting it below.

### **BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS**

#### **a. Victorian Bushfire Information Line**

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) in partnership with the Victorian Department of Sustainability & Environment (DSE) has established this bushfire information line to provide the community with a wide range of information about bushfires. The Victorian Bushfire Information Line Phone number is: **1800 240 667**.

#### **b. At Home**

All people who live in a high bushfire risk area need to develop a Bushfire Survival Plan. A Bushfire Survival Plan is a well thought out plan about how you will prepare and respond to a fire in your area. A plan should include a set of actions to address the risk and will require you to make a series of decisions about what you will do on a high fire risk day, or should a fire threaten your home. To develop your plan you need to consider all the issues about your level of risk, actions you will undertake to prepare yourself and your home for bushfire and what you will do on high fire risk days. Even if your decision is to leave the area before fire threatens, you still need a well thought out plan.

Everyone's circumstances are different so it is important that you develop a plan that suits your household. Make sure all members of your household know what the plan is and know what roles and responsibilities they have. As circumstances change, it is important that you review your Bushfire Survival Plan before each summer fire season. The Country Fire Authority website ([www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)) provides useful information that will help you to develop a bushfire plan.

#### **c. Travel in Victoria Outside Metropolitan Melbourne**

With many bushfires still active throughout the State all non-essential travel outside of the Melbourne metropolitan area should be deferred. If you must travel you should check the Country Fire Authority and VicRoads websites before your departure and tune your radio to ABC 774 AM while you are traveling to get updates on road and town closures. Please also take note of the bushfire survival strategies contained on these websites. The basics are:

If you are caught on the road, **don't get out and run:**

- Pull to the side, preferably in an area clear of tall trees and long grass.
- Put your hazard lights on and close the windows and vents.
- Cover any exposed areas of skin with a woollen blanket and get down as low as possible.
- Only when the fire has passed do you get out and move to safety.
- Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.

- Residents away from home should not try to return to the area as access may be limited and the roads may not be safe.

The websites are:

Country Fire Authority: [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

VicRoads:

<http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/Home/NewsRoom/BushFiresRoadClosures/>

ABC radio: <http://www.abc.net.au/>

ABC bandwidth frequencies throughout Victoria:

<http://www.abc.net.au/reception/freq/vic.htm>

### **AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES, MELBOURNE — CHANGE OF PUBLIC HOURS**

As previously announced on our Web site, from Monday, October 27, 2008 the American Citizens Services (ACS) section in Melbourne changed our public hours to better accommodate U.S. citizens seeking services after school hours and/or in the afternoons. Please note that these services are by appointment only; appointments must be made on line at <http://melbourne.usconsulate.gov/consular/acs/appointments.html>. Exceptions to this rule include genuine emergencies, such as travel for a death in the family or for bushfire victims seeking replacement U.S. passports.

The current public hours for Melbourne ACS are as follows:

#### **Counter Service hours (by appointment only)**

- Monday: 9:00 am — 12:00 noon & 12:30 pm — 3:30 pm
- Tuesday: 12:30 pm — 3:30 pm
- Wednesday: 9:00 am — 12:00 noon & 12:30 pm — 3:30 pm
- Thursday: 12:30 pm — 3:30 pm
- Friday: 12:30 pm — 3:30 pm

#### **Telephone Service hours**

- Monday — Thursday: 9:00 am — 12:00

Please note that the Consulate General is closed on certain [U.S. and local holidays](#).

If you have any questions in relation to our new hours please direct them to [MelbourneACS@state.gov](mailto:MelbourneACS@state.gov).

### **THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S AGENDA**

Following his historic inauguration on January 20, 2009, President Obama and the new Administration updated the official White House Web site [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) to include an "agenda" tab with key points on various issues. Additional information on current U.S. foreign policy is available through the Department of State Web site,

[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov), including recent speeches by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. For specific details on U.S.-Australia relations, please consult the U.S. Mission Australia Web site at <http://sydney.usconsulate.gov/irc/us-oz/>.

### **INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS) FORMS ON LINE**

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax forms for preparing annual tax returns are available online at <http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html>. Publication 4732, Federal Tax Information for U.S. Taxpayers Living Abroad, is also available on the Web at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4732.pdf>.

Please note that the Consular Section cannot provide U.S. taxpayer assistance, specifically in preparing tax returns. We also do not stock or provide tax forms given that those are now available on line. Rather, all queries should be directed to the IRS using the information at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). For more information on US taxation, you may wish to consult the Mission Australia Web site at <http://sydney.usconsulate.gov/consular/acs/money/irs.html>.

### **BRING YOUR OWN PHOTOCOPIES OR PAY THE FEES**

We wish to remind all of our American Citizen Services clients that as announced in our January newsletter and posted on the Mission Australia Consular Services Web site, photocopies as well as the original supporting documents have to be submitted with all applications for passports, Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, Social Security Numbers and federal benefits. We can photocopy the documents for you; however, this service incurs a fee of US\$1.00 per page.

### **CONSULAR OUTREACH – COMING TO A CAPITAL NEAR YOU!!**

The American Citizen Services Unit conducts periodic trips to Adelaide, Darwin, and Hobart to provide passport, registration, and other citizenship services that cannot be performed through the mail. We most recently conducted such visits to Adelaide in January. Subject to workload demand and funding, we tentatively plan visits to each capital in at least once in 2009. While we are committed to trying to provide this service on a regular basis, budgetary restrictions and other constraints may delay these visits. If you wish to register for notices of when a consular officer may be coming to one of these towns for consular outreach, please email us at [MelbourneACS@state.gov](mailto:MelbourneACS@state.gov). The visits are also advertised on our Web site, <http://usembassy-australia.state.gov>.

### **AVIAN INFLUENZA – BE PREPARED!**

The Department of State remains concerned about the possibility that Avian Influenza may affect U.S. citizens overseas and provides extensive information on how U.S. citizens may prepare and protect themselves against the global disease. This includes an Avian Influenza Fact Sheet, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health\\_1181.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1181.html). Additional information may be available at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

### **ON-LINE APPOINTMENT SERVICE FOR AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES**

Effective November 5, 2007, all American Citizen Services require an appointment. The appointment system allows Americans requiring services to schedule their appointment times in advance, allowing for a greater flexibility of services and reduced waiting periods. Please book now for appointments over the next two months. Americans are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this new service by booking their appointment online from the relevant service page at [Melbourne.usconsulate.state.gov](http://melbourne.usconsulate.state.gov). If your service does not require a personal appearance, you will be instructed on how to apply through the mail. For further details, please consult our Web site at <http://melbourne.usconsulate.gov/consular/acs.html>.

### **AMERICAN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

For the reference of U.S. citizens in or traveling through Australia, and without endorsing or recommending any specific club or organizations, the U.S. Mission in Australia maintains a list of clubs and/or organizations relevant to U.S. citizens. That list is available at <http://melbourne.usconsulate.gov/consular/americanorg.html>.

### **TRAVEL INFORMATION**

The Department of State publishes Country Specific Information Sheets, Travel Alerts, and Travel Warnings for places throughout the world. For the most current information published by the Department of State, including World Wide Caution announcements, please go directly to [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). To receive this information automatically, please register through the Internet-Based Registration System (IBRS) at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>.

### **USEFUL WEB SITES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

The following Web sites and telephone numbers are provided for the reference of U.S. citizens, without endorsing or recommending any organization. The U.S. Consulate General does not accept responsibility for the contents of these sites nor the information provided by these offices.

- \* Domestic Violence (24 hours): 1-800-65-6463 (toll free)
- \* Rape Counseling: <http://www.casa.org.au> in Melbourne, <http://www.yarrowplace.sa.gov.au/> in Adelaide, <http://www.sass.org.au/> in Tasmania, <http://www.rubygaea.org.au/> in Darwin.
- \* For information on Australian visas: contact the Australian Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs (DIMIA) at [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au).
- \* To obtain Australian birth/death/marriage certificates for all Australian states, visit [www.bdm.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au).
- \* For questions concerning U.S. customs rules and regulations, check out the U.S. Customs website at [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov).
- \* For information about taking your pet to the U.S., please consult the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) website at [www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov). You should also contact directly the airline/shipping company you plan to use in order to make arrangements and any required reservations in advance.
- \* Social Security Administration: For the latest in social security information, go to [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) for news and announcements.
- \* Veterans Administration: Obtain up-to-date information about entitlements to VA benefits at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov). For VA Education Benefits, go to [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov).

\* Internal Revenue Service: For tax forms and other timely information, go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

### **UPCOMING HOLIDAYS AND CONSULATE CLOSURES**

For a list of upcoming holidays and Consulate General closures, please consult our Web site at <http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/holidays.html>. The U.S. Embassy in Canberra has published the following schedule of public holidays and Consulate General closures in 2009:

<b>Mission Australia</b> Public Holidays for 2009			
<b>Public Holiday</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Observed By</b>	<b>Date Observed</b>
Labor Day	Australia	Perth only	Monday, March 2, 2009
Labor Day	Australia	Melbourne only	Monday, March 9, 2009
Canberra Day	Australia	Canberra only	Monday, March 9, 2009
Good Friday	Australia	All posts	Friday, April 10, 2009
Easter Monday	Australia	All posts	Monday, April 13, 2009
Anzac Day	Australia	Canberra, Perth, Sydney only	Monday, April 27, 2009
Memorial Day	U.S.	All posts	Monday, May 25, 2009
Foundation Day	Australia	Perth only	Monday, June 1, 2009
Queen's Birthday	Australia	Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney only	Monday, June 8, 2009
Independence Day	U.S.	All posts	Friday, July 3, 2009
Labor Day	U.S.	All posts	Monday, September 7, 2009
Queen's Birthday	Australia	Perth only	Monday, September 28, 2009
Labor Day	Australia	Canberra, Sydney only	Monday, October 5, 2009
Columbus Day	U.S.	All posts	Monday, October 12, 2009
Melbourne Cup Day	Australia	Melbourne only	Tuesday, November 3, 2009
Family and Community Day	Australia	Canberra only	Tuesday, November 3, 2009
Veterans Day	U.S.	All posts	Wednesday, November 11, 2009
Thanksgiving Day	U.S.	All posts	Thursday, November 26, 2009

Christmas Day	U.S./Australia	All posts	Friday, December 25, 2009
Boxing Day	Australia	All posts	Monday, December 28, 2009
New Year's Day	U.S./Australia	All posts	Friday, January 1, 2010

This newsletter is published by the American Citizens Services Unit, U.S. Consulate General, Melbourne, e-mail: MelbourneACS@state.gov; website: <http://melbourne.usconsulate.gov>. Effective November 5, 2007, all non-emergency services by online appointment only at <http://melbourne.usconsulate.gov/consular/acs/appointments.html>.